

2000 Annual Report Executive Summary

Lower Yakima County Enterprise Community

Lower Yakima County REC is located in south central Washington and serves approximately 15,000 residents in and around the rural communities of Grandview and Sunnyside. The area was designated as a "Round 1" rural enterprise community by USDA in 1994. The lead agency for the program is Yakima County.

Lower Yakima County REC is also the name of the 501c3 nonprofit agency formed to manage the federal program on behalf of the county. The agency was incorporated in late 1998 at which time the agency board became the citizen advisory group for the local program. Yakima County signed a service contract with the agency in late 1999 which transferred day to day management and operation of the program. The agency hired its first staff members in January 2000.

Several projects were completed in the past year. Our program partnered with a private developer to assure the completion of an at-risk 24 unit affordable housing project. The REC financed the upgrade of utilities in the area, which also prepares another tract of land for development. Late in the year the REC initiated a Home Ownership program and hired a new staff person dedicated to providing local residents with homebuyer education and financing assistance. This is a major step forward in the long run plan of a permanent housing agency to sustain activity after the sunset of the federal designation.

Industrial development has been very active in the past year. New projects in the EC area since 1999 will result in over \$31million of private investment and will add over 150 jobs. These projects were supported by over \$1 million in public investment. LYCREC co-sponsored an industrial land analysis and facilitated a study effort among area development partners reviewing possible improvements to business support programs.

Our local partners in education and healthcare came together to develop a successful rural telemedicine project application which will improve medical services and awareness of health care issues. The vocational skills program originally sponsored by REC funds completed a successful second phase with 115 additional area residents receiving job skills. And after several years of planning our one-stop job training and placement center obtained final approval and funding, with a scheduled opening in March 2001. This new \$800,000 facility assures that 35 local employment specialists will remain in the EC.

Lower Yakima County REC partnered with the City of Sunnyside on a neighborhood improvement project which installed curbs and sidewalks for 15 homes. The program also played a major role in completion of a funding proposal for a new community center, and creation of a new local government partnership working to develop a regional skate park.